

ZERALDA

G. A. WHITTLE



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ZERALDA



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ZERALDA

AN EPIC POEM

BY

G. ALBERT WHITTLE

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Come to mine aid, soft spirit of the muse
And thrill me with a melody of thine,
Direct my thought, while vestal fires infuse
A genial warmth ; so may I thus entwine
Within the circlet of my tuneful theme
A garland fair, and from the limpid stream
Let dew pearls sparkle o'er my new cull'd flow'rs :
In tiny rainbow orbs of twinkling show'rs.

ZERALDA

CANTO I.

Now bathe the towering hills their lofty
height,

In tender roseate hues of morning light,
As through the shaded green her steps
incline ;

And nigh the arbour, where the fruitful
vine

In rich effulgence grows.

Across the tufted meadow, moist with
dew,

A chaséd creature doth the hare pursue ;

With sportive glee in freedom they
delight ;
They leap adown the mossy bank, where
bright
A shining river flows.

* * * * *

Stay ! what is that which now diverts
his gaze,
Beyond the flowing stream, all in amaze ;
As through a veil he views a maiden's
form,
That, like the Dawn, enrobed in white, as
borne
On Zephyrs' breeze appears.

With lightsome tread he hastens down
the vale,

And scans the waters where the rocks
prevail :

His need perchance their numbers may
provide

A link, a chain, a bridge, to span the
tide :

Why stay for idle fears ?

'Tis even thus ; above the glancing wave,
Where crags and stones surmount a
watery grave ;

His feet scarce press the boulders firm
and round ;

Than, on the nether bank, the yielding
ground

Receiveth him secure.

Nor waiteth he to contemplate the shore,
Or rest more long than breathing doth
 restore :

But upward, where the lady meekly
 dwells,
Observing him, whose near approach
 foretells

 No story premature.

With courteous mien, and bold respectful
 grace ;—

With form erect he looketh on her face :
And radiant on a countenance so fair,
A smile of admiration reigneth there,
 That noble deeds inspire.

And while the waving branches o'er them
 bend,—

Their leaves of silver rustling, softly
 lend,
Among the trees seclusion, whispers
 faint,
That mingle with a songster's mellow
 plaint,
 Accordant to conspire.

“ Respectful homage to the sylvan maid ;”
Thus he began :—“ I offer thee mine aid,
To render such assistance that may give
Incessant action to the powers that live
 Within my mortal frame.”

She, for reply,—with attitude demure ;—
“ Accept my thanks, which I to thee
 assure :

For in thy zeal to reach this lonely nook,
Mine eyes beheld thee cross the stormy
brook ;

I crave to know thy name."

"With love," said he, "this morn I
sought the glade ;

Nor in my onward journey paused or
stay'd,

Until I thee beheld, forlorn and free :

A prize more rare than mine expectancy
Had e'en resolved to gain ; therefore I
feel

The gentler influence that thy virtues
seal,

Enduing me with willingness to show
Affections for thy weal, that grateful flow.

This I affirm,—Zeralda is my name,
Of honour'd lineage, and of equal fame."
The lady moved apace ; " Brave man,"
said she,

" I know thy worth, thy words of
chivalry

Awaken my regard,—directeth me
To prize and cherish thy true constancy.
When from my couch, within a curtained
bow'r,

I rose refresh'd and look'd athwart the
tow'r :

There on the hill,—o'ergrown with ivy
high,

A golden light, across the eastern sky,
Proclaim'd the advent of this summer
day,

That fill'd me with desire to come away.

And forth I sped across the level lawn ;
Nor heeded in my flight the startled
fawn

That crop'd the moistened tender
herbage green ;

And through the steep ravine, that winds
between

The rising hills, whose woods surmount
the dell,

I here attain'd this source of peace,—
the well,—

This vantage ground. And now, with
gladsome heart,

Perceive thy mild discretion to impart
A portion of thy bounty, that may guide
My willing footsteps further by thy side.
And now I would resolve that we should
hie

From this sequester'd tryst of liberty."

" Thy sweet discourse, fair maid, reveals
thy name,"

Zeralda said : " And 'tis for thee to claim
Me for thine own true knight, and e'en
rely

On him, whose will it is, to thus comply
With thine. Midway to yonder distant
hill,

Whose visible proportions amply fill
The far expansive retrospective view ;
Surrounded with the beach, the elm, and
yew,

There is a lake, whose fair locality,
Already may indeed be known to thee :
The same, if circumambulated round,
A good day's march would serve to mark
the ground.

Upon the mirror'd surface, firm and dry,
A miniature isle thou may'st descry ;
If from the rising uplands we survey—
A castellated structure, worn and grey,
Supported on that firm and solid bed,
Within a grove of trees, whose branches
 spread
Their leafy burthen o'er the rustic sedge,
That declines down unto the water's edge.
I purpose, that forthwith united, we
Should forward speed to that good
 destiny,
Wherein my faithful people shall sustain
Their master's wish, and give thee rest
 again.”
The lady bow'd consent unto his plan,
And said, “ Proceed, thou bold and
 goodly man.”

While thus the two their kindly greetings
changed,

Among the woods, gay wingéd tenants
ranged ;—

Their song increasing as the day's broad
light

Developed in their midst.—Rare roses
white,

And roses red, bestrew'd the path
around ;

While through the vale, where lilies fair
abound,

Upon the gentle breeze soft fragrance
flowed,

That could the words inspire of some
sweet ode.

When on the teeming deck the pilot
stands,

And utters forth his earnest firm
commands :

Attentive to his better knowledge, they,—
The men conjoin his orders to obey ;
With equal confidence the maiden moved,
To follow where Zeralda's skill approved ;
Avoiding where a rough and thorny way,
To chide their onward course opposéd
lay :

So through the furze, above a winding
glen,

And by the stream, aside the moss and
fen ;

Then climbing upward, where the mount
aspires,

With such exertion that the task requires ;
With undisguiséd joy, they each at last
Rejoice to feel great difficulties past.

Now on the elevated ridge they stand,
And look below to view the sloping land,
Whose extreme portion forms a level
beach,

Whereon that pebbled shore the waters
reach.

Nor anxious more to stay so nigh the end;
'Tis e'en with one accord the twain
descend,

Till on the shingle strand,—the haven
gain'd,

The knight and his companion well
obtain'd

Composure to their weariness and heat :
While shining waves are glancing near
their feet.

Blow, softly blow, ye gentle winds, and
stir

The drooping willows, and the bushy fir,
Whose long and sweeping branches
almost shield

A quaint and wooden structure, half
conceal'd

Beneath a canopy of sombre shade,
Wherein a boat, well trim'd, and
lightly made,

Already for the passage buoyant laid.
And now Zeralda lent his willing aid,
To guide his fair confident to a stage,
From whence, with careful steps, they
both engage,—

Each in a place to counterpoise secure,
The small craft's beams that 'neath their
weight endure.

Above the wavy element they glide,
In easy progress, on the moving tide.

To ply the oar, the maiden's guide doth
cease,—

Preferring other method to increase
Their forward journey; that, with
practised skill

Relying on the generous breeze to fill
The tried white sail, his hands unfurl so
well,

Obtaining thus more power to propel
Them gaily on their onward course
direct;

Rewarded with success in this project,
Zeralda spake in simple words a few,
Regard proclaiming that revived anew.
“If now, fair maid, I may thy name
pronounce :

Rozeina ! 'tis with pleasure I announce
A happy termination of our quest,

That, with thy presence, I consider
blest.

What higher honour, for such knight
as I,

Than to be partner of thy company :

The grace and beauty of thy fair attire,
Can one before thee sit, and not admire?
Thine hands, that now employ'd the
helm to steer,

Betoken safety on this inland mere :

From high above the sun's warm rays
come down,

And in their light thy golden tresses
crown.

I look on thee ; and with mine eyes
perceive

The grace and beauty that unite to give

Of their rich store a loveliness their
own ;—

A lily, blooming in the vale alone,
Suggests the fitting emblem of my
dow'r,—

The token of my care,—a simple flow'r,
That in itself is perfect as 'twas made :
This,—yea, and more should in thine
hand be laid.”

Thus for a space, with declaration true,
The maiden's guide continued to review
Rozeina's charms, whose innocent
reserve,

Imbued with mild forbearance, to observe
Those fond expressions of unstinted
praise,

Made still more gracious her more con-
scious gaze ;

As, looking o'er the lake, she now espied
A group of sturdy rocks that seemed to
hide

The nearest portion of the shore
behind,

They both with one accord their wills
combined,—

Gave each a measure of their wisdom's
store :

Zeralda took in sail and plied the oar ;
The maiden press'd the helm, and with
a voice

Of tuneful mellow tone, seemed to
rejoice

In words of admonition sweet and rare,
That clothed her mild injunctions with
their care.

As on, without mishap, they circled
round

The firm embedded crags, and solid
ground ;

All these they safely pass'd, and steered
their course

Direct within the harbour's smooth
resource.

There but remain'd the vessel small to
moor ;

And thus at last they touched the
welcome shore.

With deference the knight address'd
the maid :—

“ At thy disposal are rich blessings laid,
Of what this island yields, and e'en
contains ;

And such attendance that mine house
retains.

Two maids of provéd worth shall wait
on thee :

An ancient bard, with poet's minstrelsy,
Shall charm thine ear with harmony and
love :

Soft music sweet shall then his song
improve."

"Now, floating on yon turret, I descry
A sign that we may surely know
thereby,—

Our coming is observed by those within :
So wilt thou follow me,—and thus begin
The short ascent? These rural steps
are steep :

But sooner shall we gain the castle's keep,

By choosing thus the hard but nearer
way ;—

Which rule, I think, is best, as others
may.”

Thus spake Zeralda ; and the lady fair,
To climb the stair, gave they a goodly
share

Of diligence, accompanied with strength ;
And on a terrace they arrived at length ;
Then higher, through a path, that
winding far

Above, advanced unstay'd by fence
or bar.

Till on a green plateau they stood before
Stone walls, where,—in the midst, a
ponderous door,

Upon its heavy hinges, opened wide.
As by some hidden mechanism plied,

Right vigorously Zeralda pull'd the chain,
That presently they should admittance
gain :

Then took he from his belt, and blew
with will,

A silver horn, whose echoes loud and
shrill,

Reverberated through the spacious
halls,—

Repeating back their low incessant calls.
But not for long need they to watch and
wait :

A grating sound, as of an iron gate,
In movement slow,—a strength that
strength defies,

Within the arch, the stern portcullis rise.
Forthwith there came a guard with
martial mien,

And took his wonted station there
between

Two massive columns of that portal wide;
And as the lady, with her faithful guide,
Advanc'd within, the sentinel pronounced,

With slow salute, a watchword, that
announced

The peaceful tidings to his master brave ;
And, passing through the court, Zeralda
gave

His unappeaséd aid to lead the maid
Where humble full attention should be
paid,

To serve her present need. "Be not
afraid

To ask for ought of mine," he gently
said :

“ For know, thy word and wish are
paramount :

The mistress thou, of all that may
account,

And that doth here acknowledge me
their head.

As through these marble pavéd halls we
tread,

Let thy observant faculty awake,

That mem’ries in thy mind may not
forsake

Thy mild perception, when some future
day,

If here alone, remembrance shall repay
Thy brief acquaintance with these walls,
—encas’d

In oaken panels, carved and richly
chas’d ;

Alternately inlaid with quaint designs.
And now, before thy knight his charge
 resigns,
'Tis well and wise he should at once
 assume
The part of counsellor ; nor to presume
On further speech than doth our time
 engage,
Come, follow him, whose words of love
 assuage
All doubts and fears." When thus he
 having said,
The maiden through a porch Zeralda led.
Then, in a spacious chamber where the
 light
Shone thro' the amber tinted panes,
 that bright
With many colours rich, of varied hue,—

Of gold, and ruby, purple, green and blue,
Softly suffused around their beauteous
rays.

“ Whilst here thou art, for few or many
days,”

The chieftain said, “ My greater wish is
this ;

That thou shouldst feel a virtue of the
bliss,

Of healthful recreation and repose,—

Untrammel'd with turmoil, and free
from woes.

Adjacent to this room, on this same
floor,

Of equal amplitude are many more :

These for thine occupation are adorn'd ;

And for thy pleasure usefully inform'd ;

Here now I would desire thee to inspect,

The rare dimensions of that cabinet,
Therein a neat arrangement is contriv'd:
The same to know, all others are
depriv'd.

No other means are needed to remove
The sidelong panel, in its simple groove,
Than on this silver bar to gently press,
And thus come nigh a secret none can
guess.

The simultaneous effort of each hand ;—
To one, this outer rib doth yield ; the
band

Within, that girts the side, at once
declines

Beneath the other's touch ; when these
designs,

Accomplish'd as they are completed be.
Three steps from this to that black ebony,

Where joins the casement with the inner
 wall,
And o'er the wainscot heavy draperies
 fall ;
Then forcing this small crest within the
 square,
And sidelong pull the polish'd board :
 Now ! there !
Behold ! an open hollow space we see,—
A dark and undefinéd vacancy.
If thou, fair maid, were so disposed to
 solve
The problem that these mysteries involve,
Along a passage thou with ease would
 wend,
From that same vault, and gradually
 descend,
Until a slender beam of light above,

Would serve to guide thee on :—a bird,—
a dove,
Through one small aperture, would soon
be free.

A heavy door, whose bolts supply the key,
With thy concerted strength would open
wide ;

And then a gate, whose inner bars abide
The rude invader's concentrated power :
That harsh defence will stand, though
fires devour.

A chain behind the inner barricade,—
United to an arm of metal made ;
If this thine hand should strain, strong
bolts of steel
Would loose their hold. These words
in brief reveal
The only method certain to obtain

A secret egress from this high domain.
As straightway thou with ease should be
set free ;

And thus regain thy courted liberty.”

Zeralda then replaced the boards with
care,

And led Rozeina to a marble stair ;

Then gaily sounding on a golden gong,
Two blithesome maids appear'd with
dance and song.

Attired in flowing robes ; while flow'rets
gay

Adorn'd the head of each in bright
display.

“ Ah ! Celandine and Florazel, 'tis well
That each so readily within doth dwell :
'Tis here, this morn, a lady I have
brought ;

And e'en a journey made, with danger
fraught.

The sole partaker she with me hath been,
Across the hills, and through the vale
unseen ;

And now, a wish for rest her thoughts
incline ;

That care, and some refreshment may
combine

To render youthful life again renew'd,
While Hope's repose imparts beatitude.

So until early noon of this June day,

Let none desist from duty, but obey.

Adieu, Rozeina, till the mid-day hour ;

I will depart, that thou may'st seek thy
bower ;

Nor let an anxious thought encompass
thee :

But take thy rest with mild complacency.
And now, ye comely dames, with gentle
 grace

Attend this lady, whom of noble race
Doth honour lend to all who duteous give,
In her behalf, the good she may receive
Of their meek service. By such laws
 arranged,

Gratitude and faith are interchanged."

Thus having said, the knight no longer
 staid ;

But kindly bow'd as he his farewell bade.
And from the room, forthwith his men
 to greet,

Departed hence, all thoughtful and
 discreet.

CANTO I.

Part II.

The castle bell had toll'd the signal
note ;

And all within the walls, howe'er remote,
Were full apprised the breakfast halls to
seek :

No other warning needed one to speak ;
When presently before the table laid
With fare substantial, orderly arrayed,
The men and maids assembled to partake
Of that good cheer which should their
repat make.

Their peaceful morning meal was then
begun,

And gratefully enjoy'd till well nigh
done ;

When there in view, with haste there
came a man,
In clothes gold braided clad. Said he :
“ I am
Directed hither to at once make known
The doleful news,—sweet mistress Rose
hath flown,
And left no indication of her flight ;
Save in the room where she had pass'd
the night.
Her toilet she had made, is plainly seen,—
As saith her maids ; the queenly robes of
green,
She wore but yesterday, are laid aside.
To don that goodly raiment was her
pride.
The warder at the gate, who watch doth
keep

With careful vigilance,—unknown to
sleep,

In truthful words of confidence doth say,
That neither man nor maid hath pass'd
that way

Throughout the night, until this present
hour.

What time there comes relief, he quits
the tow'r ;

And none hath yet succeeded in the
quest,

To do according with the earl's behest.

But hark ! I must begone ; for now I hear
The silver bugle sounding loud and
clear."

CANTO I.

Part III.

Engross'd in thought,—with slow and
 measur'd tread,
Gwenvolan paced the hall. “And hath
 she fled,”
Said he, in tones subdu'd and low :
 “'Tis more
Than need of love that maketh her
 ignore,
The promise I have made to that brave
 knight,
Who this same day expects to claim
 the right
Myself hath granted to his own appeal;—
The liberty, that bids him not conceal
The valour of his purpose and intent,

To claim his bride : so were my wishes
bent.

Avoiding this, my daughter seeks the
shade,—

Some courtly mansion in a distant glade
Perchance may be her destiny awhile ;
And friends with love her chasten'd
heart beguile.

What clarion note is that, which doth
salute

This ancient fortress of a high repute ?
If 'tis a herald with a peaceful plaint,
He shall my favour find, as 'twere a
saint :

I will betake me to the outer hall,
And hold discourse with this bold
seneschal."

* * * * *

The warder, in abeyance to his lord,
Pronounc'd his master's message to the
word :

Whereat the pluméd knight made answer
bold ;—

“ I have a declaration to unfold ;
And crave thy master will directly give
An audience to my speech, and thus
receive

The intimation only he may hear :
'Twill calm his anxious thought,—his
sadness cheer.”

* * * * *

In mournful mood the baron sat alone :
The bells had chim'd the hour in solemn
tone ;

While through the hall, the martial
sound of steel,
And spurs of silver, clinking at the heel,

Awaken'd him anew. And soon to see
This visitor of good, whom he might be,
He wait'd not to hear the soldier's voice ;
Nor stay'd a moment in regard to choice
Of words, in which to question or
demand ;

Nor e'en with sterner tones of dread
command :

But, raising his mild eyes, he thus
began :—

“ I welcome thee, if thou a peaceful man,
Art burthen'd with the news would soothe
my woe ;

And should be loth to fancy thee a foe.
Thine open countenance of guile is free ;
And writ thereon, no thought of wrong
I see.

Tis part of my perception now, to trace

Thy master's will reflect'd on thy face.
But e'en before I further contemplate,
Will stay to hearken what thou may'st
relate."

The knight without demur his reverence
paid,

And with an easy accent gently said,—
"O'er mount and dale, I have, with
urgent speed,

Pursu'd my journey ; nor to rest gave
heed.

Zeralda of the hills,—my master brave
Doth greet thee from afar ; and this he
gave

Into my charge, which now I hand to
thee,

A scroll which bears his seal and
heraldry.

He bade me tell thee that the morning
light

This day afford'd pleasure and delight,—
Enabling him to find a maiden fair,
In lonely solitude, and unaware
Of his approach, she calmly stood to view
The undulating land,—all bathed in dew;
When he his homage paid ; and sought
her will

Implicitly on him to trust ; until,
With perfect faith, — regardful and
content,

She listen'd to his word, and gave
consent.

Of this no more my master spake again ;
But thus, in few,—unwilling to detain,
Did urge me on :—“ Say thou,” said he,
“ My care

Constraineth me to fervently declare,
Whilst in my house this lady doth
sojourn,

She shall be safe from harm, nor need to
mourn :

And glad with peace shall be her night
and day ;

As though within her father's house she
lay."

"Enough ! bold knight, thy message is
complete,"

The baron said ; "but thou canst not
defeat

My firm resolve to conquer these designs :
No word of thine to change my will
inclines.

In haste, begone,—away,—depart,—get
hence :

'Tis idleness to dwell with cool pretence
On thoughts of friendship, when a
stranger speaks.

Unto thy master say, her father seeks
No other favour at his hand this day,
Than duteous care, unhinder'd by delay ;
And courtesy unblemishéd and true.
Fulfilling this,—he shall my doubts
subdue.

Bid him regard my will, and rectify
The wrong, his froward actions testify.
Proclaim the law which I to thee depute,
That he may not Gwenvolan's will
refute ;

So when he hath my urgent will obey'd,
And to her home my daughter safe
convey'd,
He shall a fair and sure reward receive ;

And worthy he to whom I this will give.
Stay thou not here on argument to
dwell :

But forth betake thyself, through moss
and fell ;

And speed thee on apace : what e'er
betide,

Ensure the safety of Rozeina's ride ;

Back to her father's home before to-
morrow's eve,

Thine, and thy master's honour thus
retrieve !”

These were the words the baron briefly
said ;

And, with a searching glance, the knight
survey'd ;

Who, with a meek acknowledgment
withdrew,—

Unmindful of a longer interview.

CANTO II.

Not then the banquet hall was desolate ;
As, close assembl'd,—waiting to relate,—
The bard in tuneful song,—in martial
guise ;

While there, each knight, a hero could
devise,

Within their woven histories of war,
Whose fame had echo'd often from afar ;
The festive board so recently array'd
With choice and plenteous store thereon
display'd,

Was then replac'd with rich and luscious
fare ;

And fruits delicious, delicate and rare.
Reclining on an ivory carv'd seat,

Where silken textures flow'd in folds
replete ;—

Enrob'd in vestments,—tinted rose and
gold,—

A lady fair, whose beauty to behold
'Twere inspiration to a noble deed ;
And happiness to him her eyes gave
heed.

A courtly maiden on each side there
stood,

With each a countenance refin'd and
good :

While at her feet a page in velvet green
In boyish wonder view'd the changing
scene.

Behind the lady's couch, one step above,
A Gothic archway form'd a high alcove.
A courtly chair therein was well devis'd,

Mid cabinets of ivory improvis'd,
Six polish'd stairs of oak, with carpet
laid,
Reach'd downward to the floor, of cedar
made :
Where knights and nobles closely rang'd
along,—
Expectant each to hear the minstrel's
song.
Melodious music,—then in tones sub-
du'd,—
In mellow chords, intoned a sweet
prelude :
And, as their echo fill'd the scented air,
Their signal sang for silence to prepare.
A noble knight advanc'd in cloth of gold;
And, like a gentle prince and warrior
bold,

Proceeded to the high and vacant place
Beneath the arch ; and, with becoming
 grace,

Made known his glad and kind acknow-
 ledgment

Unto the maid, whose joy reveal'd
 assent.

Now high, then low, the music rose and
 fell,—

Inton'd with sounds as of a tinkling bell ;
And thus continued, like a gentle breeze
That sways the branches 'mid the leafy
 trees.

Then forth there came an ancient rustic
 sage,

Whose silver hair accorded with his age :
Upon his staff he lean'd with one firm
 hand ;

And with the other held the leathern
band,

That circl'd round his ample mantl'd
waist.

In moving nigh he show'd nor fear nor
haste ;

But halted where the lady could him
view,

And claim him minstrel honour'd, hale
and true.

Then all was still, and like a peaceful
dream ;

And on the face of Athgar,—there a
gleam

Of sunlight brightly shone, that did
inspire

His features with a warm poetic fire :

No thought of hesitation or delay

Conspir'd to thwart his will, or progress
 stay :
But taking 'neath his hand a harp gold
 wrought,
That for his learn'd employment had
 been brought,—
With light and active touch across the
 strings,
He struck the air, as doth the dove's
 white wings.
Alternately the while his features
 chang'd,
As through the paths of harmony he
 rang'd ;
Till,—lull'd to peace, and sweet as
 flowers in May,
The notes declin'd ; and thus he sang
 his lay :—

“THE MINSTREL’S SONG.”

'Twas evening ; and the western sky,—
 Tinted with gold,
Behind the distant mountains high,—
 Fair to behold.

Rose and amber shades combin'd,
There to linger undefin'd.
In their unity of light ;
Like a rainbow in the night,
Midway, across the broad green slope,
That form'd an elevated hill ;
Where shone the early Springtide Hope,
Upon that verdant pasture still :

There ;—through the budding flowerets
 sweet,
A solitary maid advanc'd :

She craved, nor looked for one to greet ;
But stoop'd to cull the flowers enchanc'd,
The more beneath her loving gaze,
Anon she stay'd to view the land
That reach'd afar,—aglow with rays
Emitted from the golden strand.

Alone,—beneath the mountain's shade,
All desolate and wild,
A weary horseman through the glade,
With noble brow and mild—

Proceeded on his devious way ;
Nor urg'd his steed, as through the day,
Where speed would but avail :
But spake in gentle tones and low,
That e'en would serve to soothe a foe,
When other means would fail.

So in the winding track he mov'd,—
Emerging on a path improv'd,
 Beyond the rocky steep ;
And through the herbage moist and
 green,
From whence the knight survey'd a
 scene
 That made his heart to leap.

With grateful pleasure to admire
The light, that made his soul aspire
 To deeds of chivalry.

The radiant sunset he beheld,
Whose bright and purple shades excell'd
 All fairest imagery.

And there,—athwart the mountain side,
A maiden lone, he then espied.
 “ Is Flora nigh ? ” said he,

In contemplation mild and good ;—
In thoughtful mood the lady stood :
 No thought of care had she.

The knight with easy pace advanc'd,
And o'er the distant landscape glanc'd,
 That lay all peacefully.

Till on the yielding vernal ground,
Beside the maid with scarce a sound,
 His further progress stay'd :

While she with quaint and startl'd
 look,
Her pleasing reverie forsook ;—
 Then her departure made.

“ Stay gentle maiden,”—said the knight,
“ My wish and sentiment unite,
 Thy recent joys proclaim.

The splendours of the sunset sky
More grand doth seem, when thou art
nigh :
So do thou here remain."

No further heed the lady paid ;
Nor longer she her steps delay'd :
But, with a fleet and active tread,
She hasten'd down the vale,
And through the furze ;—away she sped,
Beyond the flowery dale.

Scarce was the maiden's form unseen,
Than o'er that sylvan land serene
The evening shadows fell.

The knight unto the path withdrew,
And press'd his charger on anew,
Adown the shaded dell.

“ 'Tis here,” said he, “ I view the Tower,
Whereon there gleams the flag of
Gower,
Whose ancient name and wide fam'd
power,
Have often through an anxious hour,
The right defended well.

My faithful steed this day hath done
Enough of toil, and amply won
The rest and ease that may be found
Within those solid walls, that bound
The castle halls secure.

I scarce can pass my friend's domains,
That in their strength endure :
Remembrance of his friendship claims
My homage to insure.”

Awhile he mused, and thus drew nigh
Unto the outer gate,
Where pac'd a sentinel thereby ;
In service to await.

“Ah! ho; thou warder stout and strong,
Tell me, I pray,—or right, or wrong ;
As I in hope surmise,
If now thy master is within,
That I may here an entrance win,
Untrammel'd with disguise.”

“'Tis even as thou saith, Sir knight
The noble earl sojourns this night
In his ancestral home :
There lies thy path, the way is free
To him who is no enemy ;—

A weary pilgrim well may rest,
And welcome as the honour'd guest,
Beneath yon fair round dome.

“Thy truthful word becomes thee
well,—
Rejoin'd the knight “Thy voice doth
tell

The merits of the just.”
Then on he moved, the castle door to
reach,
Where stood a soldier bold of speech,—
A Sentinel of trust.

Said he, “Say, stranger, whom thou be ;
That I may access give to thee,
And freedom to advance.”

Thus spake the knight,—“ Sir Roland I,
As this my crest doth testify,
Of Thaneburg and of France.

Direct me to the inner Court ;
Announce my credence, and report
The knowledge thou hast gained.”

“ All’s well,”—the soldier said ; “ proceed ;

Observe to follow where I lead :
Thy wish shall be proclaim’d.”

* * * * *

The minstrel here desisted from his song,
And deftly swept the tuneful strings
along ;

Then,—for diversion,—with an alter’d
tone

Extoll’d the day’s broad warmth, whose
light there shone :

And while in words of ardent praise he
sang,
With inspiration new, his rich voice rang.

* * * * *

“ Enshrouded in the dewy mists of morn,
All nature nestles 'neath the moisten'd
vale,
Suffus'd in rainbow gleams ;—their light
adorn
The varied spectral forms of hill and
dale.
New birth of day around is nigh pro-
claim'd ;
Aurora in her golden car is sped,
And bath'd in amber light, with roses
chain'd,

Where hovering o'er the lofty peak is
spread

The fleecy cloud, whose ever changing
shape

Is wafted on the breeze;—there rais'd
on high :

The mountain's undulating line endrape
Grey turret's steep,—all pointing to the
sky.

Yet on the bosom of the deep ravine,
Soft misty vapours linger o'er the vale ;
And, rising through the snowy mantle's
sheen,

The stalwart trees display their myrtle
mail.

* * * * *

Behold the smiling morn, whose infant
light,

With truth, and love, and generous trust,
unite ;

In happy concord, and, with grace
combined,

To crown with heaven's own blessing
frail mankind.

All nature now in silent grandeur reigns ;
Nor gratitude of thankful heart remains
Unknown,—unfelt, or lost to thoughtful
man ;

The sun completes the work the day
began,

And rising, doth reflect the Supreme
Power :

The light of heaven adorns the shining
hour :

Forth from the East his beauteous light
displays,

In soft and lucid splendour o'er earth's
maze ;

That bath'd in dewy moistures of the
skies,

Full well partakes of virtue ; nor denies
Her liberal aid, to give new life and birth
To drooping flow'rs, to herbs, and plants.
All earth ;—

The fields,—the trees,—the sylyan woods
assume

A richer glow,—harmonic ; and attune,
In joyous transport,—ringing with delight.
And praises of the feather'd world, that
light

They all awake in ecstasy among,
Each to excel in loudest, sweetest song,

Their bright symphonious concert to
prolong

A warbling festivity.

* * * * *

All radiant are the rosy shades of morn,
That chase the twilight through the
nodding corn.

The verdant fields, and vernal meadows
gleam,

In emerald beauty cloth'd, the glowing
scene,—

In birth anew,

Becomes as though a veil,—in gauze of
gold,

Around the distant land in tinsel fold,
Would hide a sea of splendours on the
lea :

That bathe the humid air,—all tenderly,—
With heavenly dew.

Unbounded theme for reverential thought!
In broad expanse are nature's wonders
wrought.

Her endless fields of love united rise :
They beckon Trust to yield her kind
surmise

Approvingly.

The hills, whose tow'ring peaks are lost
among

High pearly plains of distant light along :
Above their height, and o'er the heavenly
breeze,

In all her virgin beauty there dwells Spes :
All lovingly.

Delightful paths of welcome she provides :
Nor cloud, nor mist impenetrable hides

The azure blue, whose all pervading
light

Doth blend the air,—rose-scented, to
invite

Our morning hymn.

The skylark soars aloft on blithesome
wing,—

Mounting, rejoicing ; gaily doth he sing :
And, like a snowflake, or as Autumn leaf
Descendeth on the heath ; or golden
sheaf ;

Or mountain limb.

* * *

'Twas even thus ;—in accents sweet and
clear,

The ancient bard acclaim'd ;—unknown
to fear.

Then looking upward where the lady
sate,
Her kindly smile induc'd him to relate
The history so recently begun.
He on without delay his story won.

* * * * *

Secluded in a favour'd bower ;—
Regardful of the evening hour,
Where soft repose could recreate ;
Scarce concious of his high estate,
Reclining on a cushion'd seat,
In peace—that follows toil and heat,
In thoughtful meditation free,
The chieftain ponder'd silently.
Unto the fading light he turn'd :
And through the twilight he discern'd
Soft beauty in the Summer's shade.
In tones subdu'd these words he said,—

* * * * *

“ Harmonious sound, soft music fills
The evening air, the joyous note
Comes floating on the breeze, and trills
A happy strain. Sad and remote
The last refrain.

Faintly rings the ling’ring echo ;
Sweetly sings the silver string :
Till, deep and low, melodious flow
The mournful mellow chords, and wing
O’er Love’s Domain.

For where my daughter’s voice is heard,
There dwells the living fount of life :
There, Peace and Joy,—both undefe’r’d,
Unite to quell all pain and strife ;
And joy sustain.

* * * * *

Ah ! here within, new sounds I hear,
Of footsteps now approaching near :
Good tidings of the evening meal,
These indications do reveal.”
And, speaking thus ;—across the floor
He strode toward the open door.
“ E’en as my thought but now defined,—
My steward thou, and squire combined ;—
A messenger of peace, I trow :
Since nought of ill doth cloud thy brow.”
“ ’Tis news of peace I have to tell,
Of weary knight thou knoweth well,
Who counsel’d me in few to say,
The while he journey’d on his way,
The shades of night their mantle wove
Across his path, above the grove ;
And thoughtful for his tir’d steed,
He hesitated to proceed.

When from the rising hill he view'd
These friendly halls ;—then all subdu'd
His every wish to further go :
Elate with gladness, crav'd to know
If 'neath thy roof a single night,
He might repose till morning light,
Of Thaneberg's Height, Sir Roland he,
As he doth bid me vouch to thee.”
“ My friend of yore,” Earl Gower said,
Attend his need ; nor be afraid
To lend thine aid with willing hand :
'Tis honour to this house and land.
When Time and Space in length unite,
And Truth, with Love, uphold the right ;
Remembrance of an absent friend
Doth on our gentle thoughts attend.”

CANTO II.

Part II.

The Minstrel paused, and silently observed

That none were slow to hear he had reserved :

But ere his theme of love he did renew,

A penetrating note an herald blew :

And through the place,—loud from a ringing horn :

Upon the morning breeze, the sound was borne,

That echo'd in the wide and lofty hall :

An oft continued salutary call ;

Confusion, where but late had peace prevail'd,

And anxious words at being thus assail'd,

Predominated now, without abate,
Among the maids and nobles there in
state.

The courtly knight from his distinguish'd
seat,

Arose in haste the messenger to meet ;
And, speaking low the lady to appease,
He then did bid the audience be at ease.
With energy he moved adown the stair,
And thro' the hall with undiminished
care :

He forth with step elate, tho' firm and
bold,

To hear the news the stranger might
unfold,

High motive for his progress did supply,
Where liberal conscience reign'd to
fortify ;

When nigh the inner vestibule he stay'd,
There for a space but brief until he bade,
An arméd officer at once obey
Zeralda's will ; nor venture to delay ;
But speed there-from, and straightway
to him guide

The warlike stranger, whom he thought
to chide.

Then moved he on ; and in a chamber
near,

Awaited there as one in mood severe.

Full loud Zeralda call'd,—“ Advance
within,

'Tis not accordant with the bugle's din,
That thou with timid steps should'st seek
me here :

Make now the subject of thine errand
clear.”

The martial stranger then, with low
salute,

Stood boldly forth, as eager to refute,
All misconception of his honour'd plea,
Of which he was commission'd deputy.
He thus in few began his grave dis-
course :—

“ Mine is no warlike mission, to enforce,
A knight's obedience to my master's
will,

If thou his word shall graciously fulfil.
By his request I am enjoin'd to say,
That thou his will shall do with no delay ;
From this thine ancient rustic island seat,
He bids me claim his own, nor brook
defeat,—

Gwenvolan's only daughter to escort :
On me devolves the duty I report ;

And now I would advise thee to inform
The noble maiden that she may conform."

Zeralda on the stranger sternly gazed,
Then, in a sonorous tone, his voice he
 raised,

"No lady that within mine house abides,
And graciously in my just word confides,
Shall, with my sanction, leave these halls
 with thee ;

Nor for a moment share thy company."

"Then I will hasten, and my steps
 retrace."—

The stranger said, and with a soldier's
 grace,

He warn'd the knight, that, e'er another
 day,

Strong force, his proud resentment should
 repay.

Nor longer there he stay'd to make
defence ;
But from Zeralda's face departed hence ;
Emerging through a porch, he look'd
around,
And all was peace, and calm, with scarce
a sound ;
A wealth of foliage veil'd the path
beneath,
And slanting downwards, join'd the
sombre heath,
That form'd a beach of green to touch
the lake,
Whose semblance to a mirror did partake.
Then through a winding path he wended
slow,
That he should safely reach the steps
below :

Midway, a shining grotto there he
view'd ;

And, moving on,—unwilling to intrude,
The entrance scarce he pass'd, when
sweet and clear,

A lady's voice did softly reach his ear,
In words, whose tone, some trouble
would infer,

Constraining him to enter and confer.

'Twas fair Rozeina, whose considerate
care,

Had prompted her unto the shade
repair ;

That she her father's embassy might
see,

And learn from him the tidings secretly.

The messenger obey'd the maiden's call,

And bow'd a glad acknowledgment
withal.

When thus the lady spake : " Tell me,
I pray,—
The warning that Gwenvolan bid thee
say.

'Tis pleasure now to see the famed
Bertrand,

And welcome to this isolated land."

" Right glad am I, fair mistress," said
the squire,

" That 'ere I leave this isle, my one
desire,

Is even thus fulfil'd ; and now, in brief,
My mission here embraceth thy relief
From bondage, that usurps a friendly
guise,

And exile, where for freedom nought
supplies ;

For if the motive of thine host were just,

His action would awaken kindly trust.
My master on his couch doth prostrate
 stay,
Discouraged and brought low with thy
 delay :
I scarce again before him may appear,
Unless I bear thy promises to cheer.
The waters that encompass this fair
 land,—
Across their depth, I have at my com-
 mand
Strong men and true, who for Gwen-
 volan's cause,
With ready zeal defend their country's
 laws,
Those soldiers bold,—their aid we shall
 not need,
If thou with me consenteth now to
 speed."

“ Encurb thy brave description,” said the
 maid,
Before thy word in dreams dissolve and
 fade ;
Through dangers rife, I have this harbour
 gain’d,
The limit of my freedom here attain’d ;
Until the midnight hour of this same
 day,
Mild peace let none disturb,—my will
 gainsay.
Above the nearest shore, across the
 lake ;
With careful diligence thy station take :
And when the belfry note rings out the
 hour,
Be thou on yonder bank, to view this
 tower :

Then, if a shining light thine eyes
 behold :

Observe the signal like a star of gold
Become invisible when thou hath shown
A corresponding gleam of light thine own.
These are the surest means which I
 devise :

To help thee in thy lawful enterprize.
Launch thou thy boat, and with three
 chosen men,

Approach this isle unto the shaded glen,
And for thy passage safely to complete,
Have care to mark the sign I shall
 repeat ;

So if to these my plans thou doth adhere ;
And straight for mine illumination steer,
Close nigh the island crags, from wreck
 secure,

Avoidance of their danger shall be sure.
Make thou the landing where the flame
doth burn ;

Nor from thy firm resolve incline to turn :
But wait until in safety I embark,
And thus we shall succeed, though night
be dark.

Depart ;—for hurried footsteps on the
hill

Do now with warning sounds the crescent
fill.”

The lady then made haste to join the
throng,—

Disposed perchance, to hear the Minstrel's
song.

“ Rely on me,—thy father's servant true.”
And saying thus, the faithful knight
withdrew.

CANTO III.

Part I.

The guests had all dispersed ; and blithe
and gay

Had been each one throughout the
summer day.

The fleeting hours of mirth at last were
spent ;

And seemingly the silence breathed
content.

Forsaken were the spacious antique halls,
Where, loud within their carven wainscot
walls,

Strange sounds of revelry erst-while had
reign'd,

Proclaiming festive gladness none dis-
dain'd.

In soft seclusion sate two maidens fair,
Who willingly had climb'd the winding
stair,

To gain the portals of a cool retreat,
And find the rest they thankfully would
greet.

“A peaceful night is this, my sweet
Eleene,—

So calm, and still, and soothingly serene ;
Methinks 'tis good to breathe the tran-
quil air ;

And when fatigued, unto repose repair.

'Tis doubtful if Rozeina thus doth feel,

Her pallor told of care she would
conceal ;

As through this room, unwonted haste
did mark

Her forward step as ne'er before. But
hark !

The chiming bells, in solemn cadence
ring ;
The hour is nigh for sleep, till morning
bring
A new glad day : and even while I
speak,
My weary senses doth oblivion seek."

* * * * *

Where are the childlike dreams of love
and home ;—
The gentle word that bid Rozeina
come ?—
The father's fond persuasive message
now ;—
Paternal prayer, that claim'd the maiden's
vow ?

The mantled lady, girt with cloak and
hood,
With fortitude and hope impatient stood :
Within her perfumed chamber waited
she,
And thought of other days,—the glad
and free ;

Till on a gentle breeze, the soft bell
note,
Resounding faint and mellow, seem'd to
float ;
Around her lithesome form she closer
drew
The ample flowing robes of sombre blue.
Then, like a brave and modest beauteous
bride,
She essay'd forth, her venture to decide.

If in a place conceal'd, in that lone hall,
Envelop'd in the gloom of night's dark
pall,

There had been one whose eyes could
watch and see ;

He had beheld a thing of mystery.

For like a stately spectre, wan and pale,—
With lamp in hand, and o'er her face a
veil,

An object moved across the cushion'd
floor ;

As though intent on something to
explore.

'Twas fair Rozeina, who with careful
tread,

Had left unheard the rest from whence
she fled :

Nor stay'd she there, to linger or delay ;

But close pursued her solitary way ;
Till, by the polish'd cabinet, alone,
The rays from her gold lamp on that
 were thrown.
She quickly proved the knowledge lately
 gain'd,
And sought the panel she had thus
 attain'd,
Which 'neath her touch,—along its
 groove, aside
Did move. Whereat, the chamber dark
 and wide
Before her all observant eye disclosed,
Evinced the witness of her quest en-
 closed ;
Nor hesitated she to enter there ;
But step'd within. No fetter of despair
Conspired to thwart her purpose or
 resolve.

With resolution firm, nor to involve
Delay, at once,—secure as she had
 found,
The entrance left ; and with one glance
 around,—
As through the secret way she hasten'd
 on,
To pierce the darkness drear—her bright
 light shone.

CANTO III.

Part II.

Across the waters ;—on the distant shore,
With worthy zeal, so often tried of yore :
All watchful and regardful of their plan,
Bertrand, with his retainers, long did
scan

The lonely isle, that in the dark midnight
Loom'd on the lake, and almost lost to
sight.

When,—Hark !—the belfry bell doth
slowly tell

The hour of twelve : and, as the dying
knell

In silence melts, the last declining note
Dissolveth like a dream in sleep remote.

Then in the awesome stillness breathed
a voice

That said, "Gwenvolan's strength is
here : the choice,

Eight valiant men selected from his
band ;—

The stout defenders of his ancient
land ;—

These shall in parties two at once
divide ;—

The four remaining, watchful to abide.

And when the light beams forth on
yonder isle,

Shall then their signal light display the
while.

And now,—ye other four,—myself your
guide :

Come, hie with me in yonder boat to
ride."

Then gladly to the water's edge they
 sped,
And boldly man'd the bark ; nor fear nor
 dread
Were known to they whose cause was
 just and good :
But, with a will to plow the teeming
 flood,
They launch'd the craft, and with their
 strength combined,
Each plied an oar,—resolved the maid
 to find.

* * * * * *

When flits a bird of freedom in its cage,
And 'gainst the gilded bars, his wings
 pressage,
Far from his captive bondage would he
 fly,

If favour'd with unbounded liberty.
'Twas even with Rozeina as she press'd,
The bolts of rusted iron in their rest :
But all the strength that she could there
 impart,
Was quite unequal to the builder's art ;
For there, at last, beneath the arch she
 stood,
And ponder'd sorely in dejected mood.
As through the trellis gate, the breeze of
 night
Play'd on her heated brow and tresses
 light ;
And while the melting air her strength
 revived,
The recollection of a means contrived
To ope the gate, inspired her heart anew :
That with fond care she did her task
 pursue.

Suspended secretly a chain she found,
On which, herself she raised from off the
ground :

Whereat, her weight, therewith for
strength became

A force sufficient to derange the frame.
The massive bolts no longer bar'd the
way ;

But creak'd aside, as with time-worn
decay.

The maiden then pull'd on the iron gate,
And freedom won,—and joy ; to com-
pensate

For all the dread forebodings she had
borne.

In patient search, and loneliness forlorn,
Forth on the outer green she silent
stood :

Then chose the downward path aside
the wood.

With pace excursive nigh the bosky hill,
She hasten'd on within a grove ; until,
Upon a rising mound,—the waters nigh,
She halted there, and raised the lamp
on high.

The symbol of her safety then she
view'd ;

And with alternate wave, her sign
renew'd.

Across the lake her anxious gaze was
bent,

Anticipating then,—of glad portent,

The witness of her rescue there to see,

In some approaching object on the lea :

Nor was her expectation unfulfil'd,

For, while she look'd, new life her senses
thrill'd

With wonderful joy : as, steering for
the shore,
A boat came gliding on. With each an
oar,
Four men defined the long and easy
stroke ;
Nor in their care the solemn stillness
broke.
Rozeina then with eager glance, descried
The helmsman, for the nearest inlet
guide
The buoyant vessel o'er the rippling
wave,
Where sparkling foam arose her sides to
lave.
Then down the bank, and on the silver
strand,
She waiting stood, to bid the boatmen
land.

They nearer drew ; and silent on the
beach

Exchanged a joyful greeting,—each to
each.

Among the pebbles, with a welcome
sound,

The boat then grated on the shingle
ground ;

And while the maiden hesitating stood,
And scan'd the waters near ; her woman-
hood,—

Whose good intention there to leap, was
stay'd :

Her need for some assistance then dis-
play'd.

With arms extended for Rozeina's aid,
Bertrand sprang forth ; nor longer he
delay'd ;

But gently, with a mild and brief
embrace,

The maiden he embark'd with courtly
grace.

From out the water he aboard then
climb'd,

And with good haste to leave the isle
behind,

Enjoin'd his men at once to pull away ;
And sturdily their strength they did
display.

· CANTO III.

Part III.

All watchful on the mainland, and alert,
Bertrand's retainers, wakeful to assert,
A faithful vigil on the night veil'd shore,
Their gaze did oft across the lake
explore.

With eye all searching o'er the welt'ring
wave ;—

With resolute intent the maid to save ;
They sought, and mark'd the starlike
twinkling gleam ;

And made their answering signal shed a
beam

Of equal radiance, and responsive light,
The indication they were bid incite.

Suffused with dew beneath the pale
 moonlight,—
The shores around the lake,—each vale
 and height,
In peace unbroken undisturbed lay.
'Twas like a dreamless sleep before the
 day.
Adjacent to the western bank where
 grew
The fir tree and the elm,—the bending
 yew,
From 'neath their shade a winding path
 emerged,
And joined the mountain roadway that
 diverged
Around the gradient of the steep hill-
 side,
From nigh the lake, extending far and
 wide.

'Twas o'er that silent land,—all calm and
still,

The light of moon, and stars pervaded,
till,

As from another region, sailing high,
Great dusky clouds were borne across
the sky.

The arch above grew dense while they
prevail'd,

And in thick darkness all the earth was
veil'd.

Then booming from the island on the
lake,

A warlike sound did then the stillness
wake :

The salutation of a signal gun

Declared pursuit, perchance had now
begun :

And while again the cannon's voice was
heard,

Repeatedly as oft, the echo stir'd
As frequently the silence o'er the land,
That through the air around, the breezes
fan'd.

Then from the mountain's path above
the hill,

A sound more pleasant did the defile fill,
Of rumbling wheels, and clat'ring hoofs
of steeds,

Continuous as wave on wave succeeds.
From shore to shore, midway, the laden
boat

Did with her anxious burden lightly
float.

Each man as one, his pliant oar did
wield,—

With sweeping curve their equal strength
 reveal'd,

As through the water with such force
 propel'd,

The boat sailed on, all vigorously im-
 pel'd.

When homeward bound, the storm toss'd
 ship rides free,

And gentle breezes kiss the great wide
 sea,

When nearing the shores of a peaceful
 land,

Gladsome are the joys of the friendly
 band.

After fond cherish'd hopes with fears
 distres'd,

The ship sails smooth in the haven of
 rest,

Words of thanksgiving from the heart
doth rise ;

And mounteth like a spirit to the skies.

Not less did fair Rozeina feel the joy, *

Of gratefulness and kindness to employ,

With those, who for her rescue had
made good

Their promised zeal to guide her through
the flood ;

When safely nigh the landing place they
drew,

And moor'd secure the vessel there anew :

There, on the shore at last the maiden
stood,

And not unmingled with regretful mood :

Although her heart was glad with
freedom's store,

In liberty for which she strived before.

A father's love had call'd her from the
isle,

Enough,—she mused was this to re-
concile

The faithless aspect of her evening flight,
So far conceal'd beneath the shades of
night ;

Though not to good Zeralda was she
bound,

The paths of duty circle her around.

But if intent to win her for his bride,

He in her father's home, would there
confide

The secret of his love ; and thus constrain
Gwenvolan's trust ;—his honour'd name
sustain.

The while, fond thoughts of love incessant
fill'd

Her maiden's fancy with new hopes that
thrill'd

Her fever'd senses with unfathom'd joy ;
Of Bertrand bold she essay'd to employ
His further guidance and respectful aid :
That on the hill, they soon their progress
staid ;

For there, beneath a high and lofty tree,
Three martial men, a coach, and horses
three,—

Awaiting all expectant for the sound,—
A signal in the silent night profound.

No hesitation then Rozeina made ;
Nor step't within the chaise as one
afraid ;

But lightly to the seat for ease design'd,
With graceful mien she peacefully
reclined.

The faithful squire soon seated by her
side,

In that lone wood, impatient to abide,
Announced a quick departure, that with
speed,

The active men accordantly gave heed
Unto his word, and willingly observed
Their duties each all vigourously
enerved.

Forth on the wide highway the horses
wheel'd ;

And rumbling on the hill in gloom conceal'd ;

On light revolving wheels, the coach of
state

Made quick advancement,—like a thing
elate,

And from the shade, like spectres in the
gloom,

More objects on the roadway there did
loom.

Gwenvolan's stout retainers, bold and
brave,

Who did their master's will the maid to
save,

Their tether'd horses they had gaily
freed,

And mounted, as before Bertrand decreed ;
That on before as one and in the rear,
They rode amain in joyous glad career ;
And through the mountain's undulating
vale,—

Across the fertile hills,—above the dale ;
Then on the ancient wellworn firm
highway,

Where on each side, the level pastures
lay,

With pace unbroken,—through the land
unseen,

Till early morn reveal'd the meadows
green,

With her equestrian company to guard,
The fair Rozeina's progress was un-
mar'd.

No hindrance there arose the flight to
blight ;

Nor barrier to oppose the might of
right.

* * * * *

On Merville Tower, when, in the break
of day,

The dawn reveal'd her pearly shades of
grey ;

There in his place, a sentinel pursued

A patrol's duty as in time of feud.
And oft he turn'd his gaze the land to
view ;
And oft he paused to speculate anew ;
Till from the fragrant leafy glen below,
Upon the breeze there flow'd a faint
echo,
As of a near approaching cavalcade ;—
A distant sound that issued from the
glade.
'Twas then the watchful sentinel refrain'd
From further progress, and his step
detain'd ;
While with attentive ear, and rapid
glance,
He heard and saw the martial train
advance.
He scrutinized the band that nearer drew :

Then with his sounding horn a call he
blew,

While through the woods, and o'er the
hills around,

An answering signal made the heights
resound.

The wakeful guard had recognized the
note,—

The glad familiar cry across the moat.

He hasten'd then the heavy chains to
reach ;

And made the bridge secure to span the
breach.

Within the ancient hall,—her dear lov'd
home ;—

Along the corridor, beneath the dome

The fair Rozeina lingered to rejoice ;

Expectant soon to hear her father's
voice.

While there she paused, a servitor ad-
vanced ;

And on the maiden's form he scarcely
glanced ;

Till she, with gentle words, his haste
detain'd :

Enjoining him to say if he had gain'd
Permission thus to wander from his rest ;
As one with fear, and grief, and care
distrest.

"'Tis even now my work is done," said
he :

"And lo! my homage now I give to
thee.

By those, who with my master watch
and stay,

I was commanded forth to guard the
way :

That, while in sleep, he calmly doth
repose,

No foe shall mar the peace these walls
enclose."

"Disturb him not,"—the maiden said :

"The day

Is scarce begun ; nor light hath chased
away

The shadows of the night that lately
veil'd

Our journey,—often with their gloom
assail'd.

But when thy master wakes, to him make
known

My glad return, that I to thee have
shown."

Rozeina then unto her rooms withdrew,
Where waited joyful maidens kind and
true ;

And for a space, soft gentle sleep conspired

To soothe the weariness her need
required.

When on that bright and sunny day of
June,

The chiming bells proclaim'd the hour of
noon,

All clad in white, a lady softly sped

Along the ancient hall with eager tread.

Beside a pearl-like portal pauséd she,

And pull'd a silken cord expectantly :

When soon the oaken door was open'd
wide,

As for her instant entrance to provide.

She linger'd not the officer to greet ;
But,—with a countenance all fair and
 sweet,
Forth through the vestibule, with smiles
 of love
She enter'd like the fond returning dove.
Before Gwenvolan,—on his couch re-
 clined,
Ere'while her gentle purpose he de-
 sign'd,—
She paused : that consciousness his
 features fired
With animating memories inspired.
“ Is that my child ? and is Rozeina
 near ?—
'Tis like a vision as in dreams appear.
Ah ! now thy fond caress convinceth me,
That with mine eyes, my daughter's face
 I see.

No will have I to give thee needless pain,
In chiding thee, when thou art here
again,

Unto thy father's dwelling safe return'd.
'Tis gladness,—and with joy we are
concern'd.”

“'Tis even so : as day exceeds the night,
So shines thy love ; but with unfading
light.”

These, with a soothing voice, the maiden
said ;

And carefully the recent days survey'd,
Until, upon the couch, where he reposed,
Gwenvolan there in sleep his eyelids
closed.

'Twas then Rozeina softly moved away,—
Intent on quick return and longer stay.

CANTO IV.

Part I.

Nine times the land in robes of night
was veil'd ;

And day's alternate light and warmth
prevail'd :

When good Gwenvolan, with his daughter
fair,—

From Merville height to breathe the
morning air,—

Rode gaily forth across the meadows
green,

To gain the vale beyond, that lay unseen.

Attendant in the rear, six horsemen
brave,

To guard the twain, their martial duty
gave.

Rozeina on her sable steed did ride :
While lovingly, there linger'd by her side
Two ladies,—each on dappled palfrey
borne :

Of one, the tint of golden autumn corn
Would liken to her spangled flowing
hair.

The other maiden's tresses would compare,
And aptly with a silken seal.

Her eyes,—
Expressive,—told of zeal for enterprize.
As through the shaded dale the group
traversed ;

And by the stream, whose rippling tide
immersed

The pliant reed, and tender lily's stem,
The birds above attuned the winding
glen.

'Twas then unto the maid the chieftain
said,—

“Methinks the rosy hue of white and
red,

Suffused on thy cheek, becomes thee
well ;

Whereon the charm of nature's kiss doth
dwell.

Now is the day on which we may agree,

With one assent, the rural fête to see :

Our journey thence, before the midday
hour,

With ease will be accomplish'd to the
tower,—

The ancient seat of bold Sir Amozel,

Whose name,—both near and far,—is
known so well ;

For generous deeds, and charity as free ;—

Approved for heroic chivalry.
'Tis he, whose declaration I recall,
But recent made to me in yonder hall.
'Twas thee of whom he spake, with
 mild reserve,
And admiration true ;—which to ob-
 serve,—
To me enlarged his virtues that were
 least,—
My good esteem, and trust in him
 increased.
Though midway in the span of life's
 long day,
With youthful fire his manliness is gay.
Along the western slope,—extending far,
One bound'ry serves our fruitful lands
 to bar.
Thus my estate and his, do both cojoin,

And seemingly, they each in one combine.
If thou consenteth soon, and he partake
Of joys that with a fond regard awake,
Then shall a father's blessing greet thine
ear,

With unity and love his age to cheer.”
Gwenvolan paused, when thus the
maiden said,—

“ My father's voice I hear : therefore,
no dread

Of ought ungracious maketh me repine,
When this advice for good is none but
thine.

The day is bright in contrast to the
night,

And hides the darkness with the morn-
ing light.

As like the rays decending from above,—

A maiden's heart directeth her in love :
But while my will is thine to mould and
bend,

Thy words of counsel shall my life
defend.

Some future day my destiny may be,
Of that fulfilment 'tis thy wish to see.
Now with thy present purpose I concur,
In thus proceeding, while we may
confer."

Communing thus, the maid her pace
improved ;

And onward in the sylvan path they
moved.

CANTO IV.

Part II.

From groves of laurel, where the zephyrs
 blow

Soft whispers of the muse, their faint
 echo :

Are these the inspiration of my theme ?

Shall they,—their voice, my song from
 death redeem ?

Ask of the forest trees, whose branches
 sway,

And wave their vernal garb in bright
 array :

All silent they, until a gentle breeze

Sighs in their midst, as like the Autumn
 lease

Of parchéd corn, beneath the gleaner's
hand

Collectively that rustle o'er the land.
And thus for answer whisper they around,
Till all are still, as in a night profound.

* * * * *

Beside a level meadow, broad and green,
Adjacent to a valley, that between
Two rising hills, a stream incessant
flowed :

Where on its bank there stood a fair
abode,—

An edifice of grandeur that display'd
Increased brightness, when the morn
array'd

Their fair dimensions with expansive
light ;

Whose graceful turrets crown'd the castle
height,
And still more grand their high proportions seem'd,
When 'neath the lofty gothic archway
gleam'd
Rare splendours of a knightly martial
throng,
That moved with regulated pace along.
In armour bright, each noble horseman
rode ;
While on the breeze his silken pennon
flow'd.
And bravely borne the crested banners
waved ;
And bright the corselet shone ; and helm
engraved
With fair and ancient heraldry, enchased

As though with threads of silver inter-
laced.

Attendant on each knight, and in his
rear,

The dutiful esquire follow'd near.

Then in the van of that distinguish'd
band,

That forth avancéd through the verdant
land ;

A company of titled maidens fair,

Contributed a beauteous aspect there.

In many colour'd robes they gaily sate ;

While lightly they conversed in tones
elate.

Soon to the open meadow through the
glade,

The long procession wended 'neath the
shade ;

And orderly advanced the cavalcade,
Till nigh a level green, a halt was made.
On either side that smooth and grassy
plain,

Both firm and strong, erected to sustain
A large proportion of the fair and free,
A gallery beneath a canopy,—

All skilful plan'd on good foundation
stood ;

Contrivéd from the dry and season'd
wood.

And many were the guests who waited
there ;

While golden music floated on the air :
Co-equal with the harmonizing sound,
In joyful cadence did their hearts re-
bound.

Then in their place,—the ladies to locate,

A courteous knight of noble good estate,
There for a space of time,—though brief,
became
An escort to each gentle blithesome
dame.
Then loud the herald's bugle note pro-
claim'd
The advent of their chief renown'd and
famed.
Quick to obey the sounding trumpet's
call,
The steel clad warriors, knights and
soldiers all,
Made each their entrance in the lists
below,—
Their eagerness for action there to show.
And many were the greetings then ex-
changed ;

As round Sir Amozel the courtiers
ranged.

Sir John de Vere was there, of Erlin
Hey ;

From Arden Fell, the stout old Baron
Grey ;

The famous knight,—the bold and strong
Lémar,

To join his friends, had journey'd from
afar.

Though time was brief, permitted to
employ ;

'Twas good to see their heartiness and
joy,

In thus reposing in each other's care ;—
A recognition all were proud to share.

Shrill was the call that issued from the
horn,

As o'er the green again the note was
borne.

And scarce the echo melted on the wind,
Than drums and silver trumpets all
combined,

To liquify the clash and clang of arms,
Whereof the sound amid the music's
charms,

Was nigh extinguish'd in the midday
heat.

And like the flowing tides where rivers
meet,

A long procession form'd, with equal
pace,

The soldiers did their even footsteps
trace.

And so continued in their onward march,
Until they reach'd a great triumphal
arch,

That span'd the southern entrance to the
square.

'Twas then in long array they halted
there.

Scarce was the captain's stern command
obey'd,

Than in their midst a messenger con-
veyed

Important tidings of a new portent,
And urgent warning of the first event.

Forth step'd Bevune of Arle, the worthy
knight :

“Why hasteth thou,” said he, “Do we
unite,

In this our strength,—and thus to be
assail'd?

Give us thy news, that we shall be
prevail'd

To pardon thy intrusion at this hour :
Declare in brief the motive of thy
power."

The horseman deftly then rein'd in his
steed,—

Unwilling from his purpose to recede.
With low salute, in courteous words he
spake :

" Mine errand here sufficeth me to take
Fair liberty,—to seek thee, and pronounce
The information I am bid announce.
The bells that now are ringing on the
hill,

Intone the signal of the baron's will ;
That when their chimes in silence have
dissolved,
Eight gilded cars,—all sumptuously in-
volved,

With shining splendour shall at once
appear ;

And under guidance of a charioteer.

For each thereof shall through the
meadow leap,—

And through the shade, as from the silent
deep,—

Four chosen horses, as on wings upborne,
Enyoken to each car. The star of morn
Liketh the subject of my further
speech :

For, looking down the hill, across the
reach,

Far in the vista of yon distant plain,

I chanced me to observe, and to obtain

The insight and conception to my ken,

Which same I turn'd me to behold again ;

Whereof the proof is this ;—that thou
may'st see

Approaching, with an order'd unity,
A small equestrian group, that even now
An aspect doth portray, which I avow
To be of much import. A banner white,
As they advance, doth wave aloft ; and
bright

Their gleaming arms appear. " Then,
herald, haste ;

Nor at this time more precious moments
waste," —

The knight replied : " for so I am dis-
posed

To send an escort through the glade,
composed

Of twelve selected men, to meet our
friends,—

If such they be ; for thee, Bevune com-
mends

Thy vigilance, and activeness no less,
In making known to me, with short
 address,
The information of the charioteers.
And now begone ; and warn thy brave
 compeers,
To make their entrance with a gentle
 rein,
With dicipline their order to sustain."

CANTO IV.

Part III.

How fared Zeralda since that night of
 woe,
Of fair Rozeina's flight 'tis well to know.
With that brave knight our thoughts are
 apt to dwell :
Of all his sorrows, who shall truly tell ;
When, from the turmoil of a festive day,
He sought his couch : the evening
 twilight grey
In darksome night had waned ; and, like
 the calm
That after storm succeeds, a healing
 balm
Of all pervading silence there reposed,

Enfolden in forgetfulness composed.
Scarce had the knight unto his rest
retired,
Than wakeful thoughts prolific then
conspired.
Impervious of sleep to render him,
That stir'd each nerve with life in every
limb.
In meditation ponder'd he full long,
As doth the poet with his tuneful song :
And, for a space, all silently he mused,
Till into speech his reverie infused
Interpretation,—audible and low,
In words of warmth unconsciously aglow.
“Wherefore,”—he said, “In this, the
midnight hour
Are these my thoughts disturb'd, soft
slumber's power

To soothe my pain, of influence hath
none ;
And like my guests that to their homes
have gone,
My fairest dreams are but as falling
snow,
That in the winter on yon lake below,
Descendeth there to melt ; yet why
repine ?
The present with the future to combine,
Availeth not my need. What though
my will
Gwenvolan's wrath to reconcile ; until
The maiden to her father be restored,
Refuted oft hath been, despised, ignored :
Yet 'tis mine earnest purpose to defend
The honour of mine house ;—for that
contend :

And when this night, the light of morn
succeeds,

Ere in the day my firm resolve recedes,
With me unto her father shall be ta'en
The fair Rozeina, safely home again."
But hark! the tolling bell rings out the
sound,

And breaks the silence of the isle around.
Perchance a sign of some invading band,
That now encroacheth on this peaceful
land."

While thus the chieftain thoughtfully
surmised,

With action swift he mentally devised
The nature of his movements for defence,
That, ere in arms he stood, the con-
sequence

Of his designing aptitude. Yet more

And louder warning had he than before.
“Now is the booming cannon belching
 forth,
The piece that on the turret sweeps the
 north.
Methinks my term of rest this night is
 o'er :
These warlike sounds recall the days of
 yore.”
Then, from his chamber, resolute and
 strong,
He forth advanced to battle with the
 wrong.
Few words Zeralda spake, when from
 the beach
He view'd the waters o'er ;—his vassals
 each
In wonder stood amazed, to see no sign

Of anger, or dismay, with devious line
His brow to mar; for he had duly
learn'd

The mystery of night,—the cause discerned.

He turned him from the shore as one
resigned;

And with reserve, — apparently designed,—

His inmost thoughts to hide. With
words in brief,

Betoken'd he his will; and, like the
chief

Who looketh on the deeds of valour
done,

And feels the victory of conquest won,

'Twas even then with equal pride he
spake,

And said : “ ’Tis thus,—that love doth
 love forsake,
Not oft. Most admirable stratagem,
In which for evil none may I condemn :
And though from this mine hospitable
 land,
The noble lady by her own command
So well her flight hath secretly contrived,
That to reclaim her here we are deprived ;
Yet, in my admiration of her deed,
Relief from care my loss doth supercede.
So ere anew the morning dawns again,
Let all my force from further strife ab-
 stain ;
That soon, their lovelorn natures may
 conceive
The virtue of sweet rest, and life retrieve ;
For when the radiance of to-morrow’s
 sun

Aboundeth in another day begun,
My purpose is to venture on the field,
With arméd men array'd with sword and
shield.

Within the space from this of three good
days,

Our journey shall be done with no
delays ;—

Omitting always at the evening hour,
When for refreshment and the slumbers
bower—

A halt be made to give essential rest,
And he who sleeps in peace will fare the
best.

Now get you to your chambers, soldiers
all,

That, wakeful ye may hear the bugle
call :

Of our departure then the hour announce ;—

Let all obey these orders I pronounce.”

When thus Zeralda had his will made known,

And full the project of his purpose shown,

No longer then he waited for reply ;

But hasten'd to his couch right manfully.

If these extending lines were to enlarge

With long description,—laden with the charge

Of infinite narration,—wrought with care,

The task would be but simple to declare.

To tell in few, when first the morn appear'd,

And summer's warmth the fair bright landscape cheer'd,—

How buoyantly, across the lake's expanse,

The chieftain with his retinue did
advance ;
And how, when once the mainland they
regain'd,
And each his warlike noble steed
obtain'd,
Within the homestead that adjacent
stood ;
Then essay'd forth with bravest hardi-
hood.
And so pursued their onward course
each day ;
Until they reach'd the halls of Baron
Grey,
'Twas here the chieftain with his faithful
men,
From further wayfaring desisted then.
Thus, in the evening hour, Zeralda found

A rendezvous in peace, encircled round
The castellated harbour of his friend ;
Whose outer walls were equal to defend
The grand old Towers within from
hurtful harm :

The aspect of their grandeur gain'd a
charm

Of richer beauty in the sun's broad
gleams,

Whose rays translucent shone in golden
beams.

'Twas here the chieftain and his soldiers
bold,—

Collectively,—as in one common fold,
Enjoy'd the rest sufficient for their need :
So doth his flock the tender shepherd
lead.

And thro' the twilight of the evening
shade—

Dissolving in the air, o'er mount and
glade,
Pervading moistures bathed the land
around ;
While from the woods, there came the
crystal sound,
Of congregating birds in song so sweet ;
Soft notes, that e'en the night seemed to
repeat
Their wonted hymn of sympathetic
praise.
Whereof the sound inspired the chief to
raise
His genial voice in mild request for all,
That presently inside the outer wall,
The faithful warder render'd he his
skill,
Efficiently his calling to fulfil.

That each good horseman with his steed
should find,

Refreshment sure peculiar to his kind.

Nor less of joy did bold Zeralda feel,

When with his friend, unmindful to
conceal

The fervour of his gladness, to behold

In one whose provéd worth in days of
old,—

The hero who had oft his fortunes
shared ;

And for his gain gigantic dangers dared.

'Twas past the midnight hour, when each
arose

To seek the comforts of a calm repose.

And not until had pas'd the Day of Rest,

Did Baron Grey,—accoutred in the
best,—

Assemble on the green his martial
train,—

A chosen few he honour'd to retain ;

When forth the order went at early
morn ;

The soldiers had obey'd the sounding
horn ;

Co-equal with Zeralda's sprightly band,
They each and all were ready at
command.

It needeth not on further words to
dwell,—

Expressive of their progress through the
dell,

Or o'er the height, and cultivated land,
That all expansive lay. With steady
hand

The rein was held. All cheerful and
bright

Each day they rode,—save in the dark-
some night,
When for reviving elements of sleep,
From nourishment more energy to reap,
They halted each in unison of mind ;
And in the morn,—with strength and
will combined,
Again with vigour, and with life renew'd,
To reach the chieftain's halls,—their
march pursued.

CANTO IV.

Part IV.

Now turn we to the scenes of gaiety,—
The antique lists of ancient Haerliem
Lea ;

Where belted knights had, through the
day, engaged

In vanquishing his foe : nor yet enraged
As with an enemy ; but sportive all ;—

With none of hate or anger to appal.

The contests of the day were long begun.

By some were trophies lost ;—by others
won,

Each comely worthy knight of fair re-
nown,

Had inly strived to gain the victor's
crown :

And, ere the last event was entertain'd,
There came a pause : though ques-
tioned,—unexplain'd.

When through the archway on the
western side,

A warrior brave on noble steed did ride ;
The history of kings records the name
Of one, who in succession third became ;
A son had he, for equal virtue famed,
Who, for distinction, the Black Prince
was named.

And this bold knight, who on the field
advanced ;—

Whose burnish'd arms upon his breast-
plate glanced ;—

Who, conscious of past deeds of valour
done,

Was even like the brave King Edward's
son.

But, ere we further linger to observe
His goodly presence and benign reserve,
'Tis well, in this narration, to relate

In few that onward in the theme create
Of other scenes, a history to tell ;—
Where, in the midst, there stood Sir
Amozel ;

Who, when the day's rejoicings part
were o'er,
Had in the shade withdrawn, and
ponder'd sore.

Though soon again to join the noble
throng,

Had not in rest alone debated long.

'Twas Earl FitzJames on whom his
search was bent,—

As, to and fro, his guests and colleagues
went ;

When lo, as turning in his path around,
The friend he most desired to see, was
found.

Then unto him with confidence he spake,
While all his speech of trust seemed to
partake.

“ Right glad am I to meet thee here,
And once again—my friend—thine heart
to cheer.

Let these my words of welcome testify,
That I on thee explicitly rely.

Here once again,—as in the days of
yore,—

The warlike pastimes now are almost
o'er :

And ere the last event is consummate,

I have another plan'd to compensate
For ought of disappointment or dismay,
To those who had no triumph in the
fray.

Of all the knights courageous who have
wrought

Their deeds of merit, and the laurels
sought ;—

Yet is there one that presently shall try
The prowess of the best who him defy.

And now, of thee I would a ruler make,—

If thou of this good service will partake
To represent me in the open field ;

And also in the lists the right to shield.

For other duties have I to perform,

Which render me unable to conform,

In supervizing with attentive care,

The progress and conclusion just and
fair.

More of the stranger knight I have to
say ;
That if of indiscretion he display,
Or disregard of chivalrous restraint,
Then stay not for me, of this to acquaint ;
But of thine own accord thy wisdom
show,
And chastisement,—which thine is to
bestow—
On him who acteth ill do thou dispense.
And unto they who do not give offence,—
Let them have opportunity to prove
The merits of their skill in deeds of love.
'Tis even thus : provision hath been
made,
For he who wilfully the games degrade.
Detain him as a prisoner of war ;
And for his guard appoint the brave
Lémar.

For answer, then FitzJames did briefly
say,—

“These thy commands 'tis pleasure to
obey :

The honour which thou on me hath
confer'd

Is of esteem the best when thus prefer'd.

Then each in turn his mutual zeal de-
clar'd ;

And with a warm adieu, they nought
despair'd.

CANTO V.

Part I.

Like murmurs in the forest on the
breeze,
That breathe full loud among the leafy
trees :
As on the beach the foaming rollers
break,
And in their backward flow the sands
forsake :
Like waves tumultuous on the shining
stream,
That o'er the cliffs and crags in volume
teem.
Thereof the sound, their equal could
be found,

Within the lists that fill'd the air around,
When through the throng assembled in
the west,

An anxious tremour fil'd each beating
breast.

As in their midst a stranger knight
appear'd,—

Firm seated on a steed that light
career'd,

Replete was he in armour dark as night ;
And like the hue of jet his horse as
dight.

No opposition hinder'd his progress,
As forward he advanced. The wide
egress

That on the eastern side converged, was
closed ;

And all who would there pass, the
guards opposed.

The black mysterious horseman look'd
around ;—
A moment paused, and eyed the level
ground.
Then with a searching gaze and rapid
glance,
He well observed, and mark'd each
circumstance,
And situation of the maidens fair,
That occupied their place with modest
air.
As o'er the scented blossoms, bright and
gay,
The bee industrious hovers through the
day,
And where the flowers plenteous gorgeous
grow,
Doth in the summer sunshine to and fro,

From one fair bloom unto another fly,
And in the twilight homeward straight
doth hie :

So this brave knight, with admiration
moved,

To view the gentle dames his pace
improved ;

He from his course direct nor ^ronce di-
verged ;—

Nor yet his charger undecorous urged ;
Till scarce beneath the balcony he staid,
And in their place the favoured guests
surveyed.

Then at his feet,—descending from above,
A simple token fell,—a lady's glove.

He turn'd his horse around with gentle
rein,

Therewith his sword the gauntlet to
regain :

Swept deftly as he stoop'd and thus to
lift,
The fragile silk he pierced ; the action
swift
A delicate and graceful art proclaim'd,
As, with his sword, the knight the glove
reclaimed ;
The prize with mailéd hand extended
high,
He offer'd to the maid, who timidly
Her sweet acknowledgment, and thanks
avow'd,
In words whose tone a tenderness
endow'd.
And ere again from him she back with-
drew,—
Not louder than to reach her ear, in few—
The armour'd soldier said, “ Feel no
alarm

At this my voice ; and unto thee no
harm

Shall then befall ; few days have lately
sped,

Since to his island home, Zeralda led
The lady of his choice. 'Twas love and
joy

They innocently shared ;—with no alloy
Of bitterness, until the midnight hour,
When fair Rozeina then forsook her
bow'r.

But yet ;—not distant far the day may
be,

When thou and he, in plighted unity,
Shall solemnize the matrimonial vow,
And then his love for thee,—as even
now,—

In true and faithful constancy, will bless

And cherish thee with fruitful happiness."
No more in mild discourse the knight
was heard,
As shrill the trumpets call,—till now
defer'd—
In notes tumultuous sounded loud and
long ;
And like a clanging bell, or brazen gong,
Strong arms on drums and cymbals
rattled free,
That echo'd thro' the air incessantly.
Then forth there rode a herald on the
green,
And took his station in the space be-
tween
The bound'ry of the north and south
confines.
Along the east and west the marshalled
lines

In warlike order stood ;—when on the
field

A mounted soldier, girt with sword and
shield,

With confidence advanced ; nor stay'd
until

Beside the herald waiting to fulfil,

Whate'er of declaration or decree,

To be announced thereof by him should
be.

Then all was silent for a moment's space,

When, from a parchment roll, with
soldier's grace,

In sonorous voice and clear, that all
might hear,

The herald thus began :—“ All ye that
here

Within the sound and measure of my
voice,

Who have this day assembled to rejoice,
In contemplation of true chivalry ;
Now with attention hearken unto me
“ ’Tis thus appointed, as I here declare,
For those good knights who have de-
signed to share,
Approvedly their horsemanship and
skill,
In deeds of valour, wherein nerve and
will
Are indispensable. A laurel crown
Shall be the just reward ; and fair
renown
Each honour'd name shall grace. And
for the knight ;—
If such he be, who hath usurp'd the right
But late to enter uninvited here,—
Thus far in arms audacious to appear ;—

On this broad green he soon shall be
chastized,

And taken captive if he hath devised
A plan of ought which may not lawful
be ;—

These are the tokens of my heraldry.”

Advancing near, the black armed horse-
man rode,

And on the herald watchfully bestow'd
A scrutinizing glance. His bridle rein
Hung loose and careless, like a pliant
chain.

“Vain words,” said he, “are thine, which
me defy;

And foolish is thy simple vanity.

Lay by thy horn ; nor let thy voice be
heard :

For e'en too long my time hath been
defer'd.

Why linger there, and hesitate? Away!
Or stay, while I thine insolence repay.
'Tis thus I cleave thy bridle rein in
twain,
My brand is keen; so tempt me not
again."
His steed, from whence he came, the
herald led;
While, forging on the field, the heavy
tread
Of mounted horses made the ground
vibrate,
And silent, as expectant to await
The ultimate development and end,
The awed spectators waited to attend;
Around the noble but offending knight
The soldiers in their burnish'd armour
bright

A circle form'd, when from their midst
stood forth

Sir John de Vere of honourable worth.

“This day of sport,” he said, “is well
nigh spent,

And all the games thereof, that represent
The customs of the pass'd, have been
rehearsed,

With modern entertainment interspersed,
The final episode doth yet remain

To be attain'd, appointed to retain

The fame of Amozel ; this stranger bold
Whoe'er he be, with conduct uncon-
troll'd,

Must first receive the measure that is
mete—

Of lawful judgment, proper and discreet.”

Sir John then on the stranger knight did
look,

And with a fixé glance of stern rebuke,
He thus began. "'Tis thee of whom we
 speak,
Nor would we here another method seek,
To make thee subject of admonishment,
Or argue of our own astonishment,
At thy encroachment on this vantage
 ground,
Where loyalty and welcome friends
 abound.
If thy demeanour had been more re-
 served,
Thy presence here would then have been
 observed
With full extension of profound respect ;
But since thine action hath evinced
 neglect
Of that decorum which evokes esteem,

There is but one alternative, and theme
Of procedure that we extend to thee,
Our willingness to hearken to thy plea ;”
In vain he paused for some response to
hear,

While nigh the stranger knight he drew
more near,

And thus resumed, “ Why doth thou
silent stand,

When freedom may be gain'd by speech,
thine hand

More active is than is thy tongue to move,
Unlock thine helm, that we may fairly
prove

Thy just identity ; obdurate still,
Then hold thy secret undiscern'd, until
Within a guarded chamber, thy discourse,
A sterner measure may our will enforce,

Relinquish now thy sword, nor fail to
 heed,

Renounce thy purpose, nor ignore our
 need

Of thy obedience ; and our care shall be
To furnish thee in due conformity,
With more attention than would else
 condone

Unto thy comfort and thy peace alone."

'Twas then among the gentle maidens
 fair,

A murmur as of sadness and despair,
Breathed for a space, as there like melt-
 ing dew,

Their hopes, which they had ventured
 to construe,

Dissolvéd like a dream when night hath
 fled ;

For, looking, they beheld their hero led,
In close captivity ; with gaze intent,
Upon the stranger knight each eye was
bent ;

A maiden saw the dark retreating form,
The lady, who but recently had borne,
The rapture of his love illumined
glance,

That so conspired her nature to entrance
With hope's simplicity ; engrossed was
she

In contemplation of futurity,
No outward sign of inward care appear'd
To testify of sorrow she revered.

As there, unmoved, and waiting to abide,
She heard at last the bells of eventide,
And as the mellow notes resounded clear,
Ding, dong, upon the breeze came float-
ing near ;

Yet, not alone had she to meditate,
Nor for a longer term in grief to wait,
As there, beside her with a father's care,
Gwenvolan stood, nor was he then
aware,
That ought of sadness had sufficed to
lend
Unto her heart, a wish to comprehend
The mystery of love to soothe her woe,
Until her inclination to forego
The joys of recognition, and of speech,
Involved the silent evidence to each.
"Methought," said he, "my daughter
would rejoice
At this late hour to hear her father's
voice,
'Tis not thy wonted custom to repine,
Nor is it now my purpose to resign

The gentle duty that on me devolves,
Which is, to guide thee as my will
resolves,

More trying than constrain'd captivity,
Is forced exemption from activity.

But now to compensate, is peace ensured,
For that, which thou in patience hath
endured ;

Good news have I for thee, that may
subdue

Thy tendency to mourn ; to live anew,
Within the light of tenderness and love,
This is for thee to choose, and to approve ;
Not forward in the field hath been my
friend,

While other knights assembled to con-
tend,

This day in arms, have manfully sustain'd

The customs of the past and honours
gain'd,

But good Sir Amozel, more care hath he
For others welfare, and their joys to see ;
Alternate rest avails a sweet resource,
Thus for a term with me he held dis-
course,

And glad was he when I pronounced
thy name,

If sad before, his weakness then became
The strength of one who faithfully relies
Upon the spoken word that truth implies,
He bade me tell thee of his joy to know
That thou wert near, and linger'd to
bestow

The simple token of an honest friend,
On me, for thine acceptance to commend ;
So now, his signet ring I give to thee,

And none more willing to comply than
he—

To gratify thy wish, if ought there be
Of his, that claims thy curiosity,”

The maiden with a bridled eagerness,
Acknowledged then her fortune to
possess

The jewelled ring, for surely thought
she,

It were an easy task, as with a key
Without restraint to enter, and explore
The chambers of Sir Amozel, and o'er
Yon mansion range. “The circlet I
receive,”

The lady said, “And gratefully perceive
The donor's warm intent, but more of
joy

At thy return, my thoughts and love
employ."

4 Unto the stately halls that stood in view,
'Twas then they each with one accord
withdrew.

CANTO V.

Part II.

Traversing in the gloom with silent
tread,

In flowing robes and veil envelopéd,
Along a smooth and tessellated floor,
Beneath the arches of a corridor,
An eager anxious maiden onward sped,
Nor in her mission had she ought of
dread,

As nigh the guarded entrance she
advanced,

Whereon the graven portals gleam'd and
glanced

The silvern lamp rays of the watchful
ward,

Who waited there in solitude as guard ;
Respectful then he spake unto the maid,
And sternly though persuasively he said :
“ My duty binds me to enquire of thee
If some momentous deed of urgency,
Is thine to do, for there are few would
dare
To venture here, without a guide to
share
The enterprise,” impatient of delay,
With bold remark that argued no dismay,
Unto the sentinel the lady turn’d,
And answer’d thus,—“ Thine eye hath
not discern’d
The cause in me of one that would in-
trude,
And yet art thou with consciousness en-
dued,

Of my intention, which is to request,
That thou wilt now proceed to manifest
The virtue of obedience to my plea,
And give me access, with admission, free
Of all remonstrance to thy prisoner ;
And question not my right to seek him
there,

Let this suffice, thy master's golden seal,
For my entitlement and just appeal."

"I recognise," the warder said, "the ring,
And honour her who doth this token
bring."

He then with willing hand applied the
key,

The heavy bolts withdrew advertently,
'Twas then, without demur, the gentle
maid,

Forth enter'd in the dusky long facade,

Nor pauséd she, until where faintly shone
A beam of light : in slanting rays upon
The dungeon door, whose outward bars
of steel

Were 'neath her gaze sufficient to reveal :
The near approach and close proximity
Unto her heart's desire ; she heaved a
sigh—

The burthen of a maiden's sympathy,
With fond expectancy her love to see ;
She backward drew the bolts, and
breathed his name,

Nor would her tongue, a sentence further
frame,

Until, upon the oak a tap she gave,
But faintly—to announce her will to save,
The lonely captive from a close durance,
A creature seemingly of circumstance ;

“ ’Tis I, Rozeina, who thus far have come,
To render thy detainment less irksome.”

The door she press’d and ere to open
wide,

In glad familiar tones the knight replied,
“ A lady’s voice I hear, whose words
declare

A kind participation in my fare ;
Good maiden enter, and, on me repose
Thy confidence, that soon we may dispose
And regulate our plans, I welcome thee,
As one, who doth make sweet, ad-
versity.”

She stepp’d within, and ventured then to
say,

“ ’Tis with a thankful heart I do obey,
Zeralda’s will, yet this I could not tell,
But for the token of Sir Amozel—

His seal, unto my father which he gave,
Apportion'd to myself, from harm to
save."

"Glad is mine heart with joy," Zeralda
said,

As fondly he the maiden's form survey'd,
The ring, which in thine hand hath aided
thee,

Hath furnish'd thee with full authority,
According to thy choice, to range at will
These spacious halls among, but not
until

The games were o'er, could'st thou the
seal obtain,

Which proved thine heart my liberty to
gain,

For know, that he from whom the gift
was ta'en,

Doth even now exhort thee to remain,
But for a space in this sequestered cell ;
Wherein the history I have to tell,
Accomplish'd is complete ; my prayer is
this,

That thou wilt not consider me remiss,
In thus acquainting thee ; and more
would I

Of truth desire, which is thy lenity.”

“Methinks thy speech would better be
defer'd,”

The lady said, “for surely thou hast
err'd,

In nought which needeth my reproach ;
to thee

Unkind, and most ungrateful should I be
To disregard the tokens of thy zeal,
That with thy welcome now reveal

Thy faithfulness, in this I am content
That thou art free from harm, and not
absent

From this, thine own ancestral heritage,
Where friends have here assembled to
engage

In joyous unity." He thus replied,
"Of confidence thy word hath testified,
And this ordains that briefly I should
speak,

That we the sooner may our refuge seek
In yonder banquet hall this gladsome
eve,

With one accord and high prerogative,
To give a hearty welcome unto all,
The high and low alike the great and
small ;

A secret plan have I to hasten hence,

For thee, Rozeina, be in no suspense :
When thou again the entrance hall hath
 gain'd,
But let thy mild forbearance be retain'd,
And with a natural concinity,
Maintain thy wonted equanimity.
So shall a father's blessing on thee rest,
Which is of all thy benefits the best,
He whisper'd soft, " Till then, my love,—
 adieu,"
And with a lightsome step, the maid
 withdrew.
Zeralda then proceeded to apply,
His skilfulness and ingenuity,
So to evacuate without delay,
The chamber wherein he was loathe to
 stay.

CANTO V.

Part III.

A mellow note the castle bell had toll'd,
A sound that echo'd like the ring of gold ;
Within the hall, were seated in the shade,
Gwenvolan and his daughter, light
array'd ;
And, while they each alternately conversed,
Before their view, that leisurely traversed,
Along the corridor the nobles paced ;
And portly dames and maids their foot-
steps traced.
Unto Rozeina, thus her father said,
“ Thy sadness with the light of day hath
fled,

And this, my child, thy faith doth indicate

In my assertion, spoken to create,
Thy maiden's trust in good Sir Amozel—
Whose coming we await; and so 'tis well,
For if thy will to this would not incline,
And so, . . . devoid of concord to combine
With him in fervency thy love,
Then minded should I be to disapprove
Of such dissension; but, as thy design
Is otherwise, and equal unto mine,
May peacefulness and joy thy portion be
The evidence of unanimity.

And now Rozeina is our vigil done,
For yonder comes the knight, who well
hath won

The honours that a gentle bride bestows
On him, that in his valour doth repose,

The virtues which inform a generous
heart—

And to his mind, a nobleness impart ;”
Gwenvolan paused, while with a look
benign

His visage glow'd, as doth the sunlight
shine

Upon the crystal wave,” “Glad day,”
said he,

“Is this my friend, wherein our unity
Conduceth to our need such happiness,
And saves us from a lonesome pensive-
ness.

This is my daughter, who, with loving
care,

Hath been disposed with constancy to
share

Her father's sorrows and felicity,

With sympathizing loves simplicity.”

“Of this I know,” Sir Amozel replied,

“For gentle fair Rozeina, far and wide

Her graciousness abounds, the light of
morn,

That with effulgent rays the earth adorn,

Is semblant with her nature to compare,

That yieldeth healing balm for grief and
care,

And now, a welcome greeting I extend,

To her and thee, that ye may com-
prehend :

The joys unfeigné that in truth transcend

My warmest speech, empowered to por-
tend,

A heartfelt sentiment ; there is a name

That yet remains unrecognized by fame,

And e'en perchance to thee may be un-
known :

The same which, I aver, that is mine
own ;
Nor would I choose in future to conceal,
This knowledge from thee which I now
reveal,
When first my secret I declared to thee,
'Twas with mine eyes, thy daughter's
face to see,
That to thine house my steps were often
bent ;
And she for whom I sought, if not absent,
Withdrawn from my view herself would
be ;
But no dismay would then dishearten me,
'Twas not enough that in a rural glade,
Her beauty to my ken, had been display'd,
While she, unconscious of a stranger's
glance,

With modest guise continued to advance.
Delightful was the fair auspicious morn,
When on the fragrant breeze the dew
 was borne,
That I had wandered forth at dawn of
 day,
Amid the flow'rs that in profusion lay
About my path beneath the sylvan shade,
And in seclusion, saw a sylph-like maid,
In solitude alone ; then marvel'd I,
And hasten'd to her side right willingly ;
The blessing of those joys in words to
 frame,
May not be in my simple speech to name."
Then spake Gwenvolan, " Now, a
 moment stay,
For to my mind, thy converse doth
 convey

Enlightenment, and information new,
That even doth acceptably subdue
Strange doubts, that have but late perplex'd my thought,
Pertaining to the knight, of whom but nought
To me was known, beyond his action bold :
Whereof my daughter ventured to unfold,
With delicate reserve, her words defined
The symbol of her faith, and me inclined
To hearken to the narrative she gave,
Which was an eulogy more gay than grave ;
Thus far by me her word shall be sustain'd,
Thrice bless'd is he who hath her favour gain'd."

“My dearest father, whose propitious
care,

Is for my weal the best that love may
share,

Forbear thy compliment,” the lady said,

“Nor deem the conduct of a simple
maid

Immaculate : and perfectly all wise,—

If ’tis a daughter’s duty to despise

The homage of a courteous valiant
knight,

Whose one integral law is just and right ;

Now in yon sombre hues of this glad
eve,

Night’s sable mantle doth her shadows
weave,

The sun’s red gold hath faded in the
west,

The birds have ceased their song, and
gone to rest ;
Serene and still, all silent and subdued,
The undulating earth, no more endued
With light of day, is hidden 'neath the
veil,
Where melting moistures in the gloom
prevail ;
Unnumber'd stars, the golden lamps of
night,
Now fill the spacious arch, all twinkling
bright ;
The virtues of the land involv'd sleep
Beneath the shade, like treasures in the
deep,
And yet full long we linger hear to stay,
When 'tis unwise our journey to delay ;
So hasten now my father to employ,

Thine early effort, that we may enjoy
A peaceful quick departure to our home.
And thee, brave knight, I can not bid
 thee come,
For many guests there be, who anxious
 wait
To see thy face, that now is animate
With genial light, and life." She spake
 no more,
But waiting stood, while gentler than
 before—
Zeralda said, "'Tis thine own heart
 sweet maid,
A casket rare, wherein are treasures
 laid
Of love, that causeth thee of good to
 see,
In mine own countenance so pleasantly ;

And now just for a space may we
partake,

Of sustenance that doth provision make,
And strength renew'd for active enter-
prise,

So shall our conduct be discreet and
wise ;

'Twas then they each proceeded through
the hall,

As though attentive to the bugle call,
A silvern note that echo'd far and near,
And nigh the banquet chamber sounded
clear ;

But 'twas not here the chieftian thought
to guide

Rozeina and her father by his side :

“ Another plan have I,” he gently said,

“ For our convenience, that ye may not
dread

To this glad festival, the sacrifice
Of fleeting time, which less than doth
 suffice,
Is now to join the throng ; so follow me,
And soon shall we this night prepared
 be
For due investigation of the field,
The happy homeward journey that may
 yield,
Of disappointments none, but peace and
 rest,
So shall that sweet reward be manifest.”
'Twas in the silence of the midnight
 hour,
When fair Rozeina sought her perfumed
 bower,
No anxious care, or pensive thought had
 she,

But dreams of love, and sweet tranquility.

* * * * *

On Merville Tower had dawn'd the morning light,

A gladsome August morn, the shades of night

Were now dispersed, dissolvéd like a show'r,

The dewy moistures on each herb and flow'r,

Like jewels sparkled on their tender leaves,

In crystal beads begem'd the golden sheaves ;

Among the hills, and in the valleys green,

Beyond the mount, and in the dales
unseen,
The shepherd's treasures grazed,—like
silver shells,
Of varied note, was heard the tinkling
bells.
Their soft metallic ring in tuneful sound,
Did sweetly echo through the air around,
As though with mystic wand and
hammers light,
A dream of fairies struck the anvil
bright ;
Beneath the swaying branches of the fir,
And sturdy oak, whose leaves the breezes
stir,
There, hand in hand the maidens all
unite,
In joyful acclamations of delight ;

While gaily ring the merry wedding
bells,
That pealing oft of happiness foretells,
Among the hills, their echo doth re-
sound,
And through the woods, and in the dales
around.

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